

Docket Item #10-B  
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2003-0007  
RECREATIONAL NEEDS

Planning Commission Meeting  
May 8, 2003

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for an amendment to the City's Master Plan to add the Strategic Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Cultural Activities as a chapter to the Master Plan.

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**CITY COUNCIL ACTION, MAY 17, 2003:** City Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, MAY 8, 2003:** On a motion by Mr. Robinson, seconded by Mr. Leibach, the Planning Commission approved the master plan amendment, with the specific amendments attached below. The vote carried on a 7-0 vote.

**Reason:** The Commission endorsed the long work by many parties on an Open Space Plan and a Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation. Having been involved in the process itself, the Commission noted how inclusive it was and thanked staff and involved citizens for their efforts. With regard to the content of both plans, Commission members noted how easily they and others talk about the benefits of open space, parks and recreation, but that without specific goals to guide them, it is difficult to achieve specific results. The Commission stated that it looked forward to working with staff in the future as the goals of both plans were implemented.

**Speakers:**

Ellen Pickering, spoke in support of the plans and requested that a series of specific language amendments be incorporated related to: referencing the need for additional parkland on the Waterfront, and making specific reference to the need to connect stream valleys and other natural areas. The Commission incorporated the changes, asking staff to assist in the drafting. The proposed Commission changes are attached.

Cindy DeGroot, Environmental Policy Commission, spoke in support and endorsed the hard work by many people over the past several years.

Poul Hertel, spoke in support, but suggested that Peter Harnick's speech from the Open Space Summit be included as an appendix to the Open Space Plan.

Judy Noritake, Parks and Recreation Commission, spoke in support of the process as well as the resulting plans.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission initiate, on its own motion, an amendment to the City's Master Plan to add the Strategic Master Plan for Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities as a chapter of the Master Plan.

## DISCUSSION

The City has recently completed an Open Space Master Plan that is being considered as an amendment to the City's Master Plan. During the planning process for the Open Space Plan, it became apparent that the City also needed to review long term planning not only for open space but also for recreation and park opportunities. A second initiative was launched with a City Council appointed Needs Assessment Steering Committee, the Park and Recreation Commission and Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities staff. Working with an outside consultant and with a large amount of citizen input, the Strategic Master Plan for Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities was formulated.

The Strategic Plan is intended to provide broad policy and management framework to guide decision making in the next ten years to meet the land use and recreational needs of Alexandria residents. The plan's most important goals include developing fifteen miles of new trails to connect the parks system and provide a greater ease of access for citizens to move about the city, acquire an additional 100 acres of open space to provide greater equity access to parks, develop a multi-generational center in the center of the city, renovate both Charles Houston and Patrick Henry Recreation Centers, develop a new neighborhood recreation center in the western part of the city, add additional sports fields and create new funding sources to support operational costs. The plan reviewed all parks, facilities and programs and made recommendations for capital improvement needs, maintenance issues, staff development and administrative policies. The plan specifically identifies key goals to be achieved over the first five years and an action plan to help guide these efforts. This plan will require the cooperation and coordination of several departments including Planning and Zoning, Transportation and Environmental Services, Human Services, Office of Management and Budget, Police and Fire in addition to the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department.

While the Strategic Plan guides the physical development of the City in terms of parks and recreation needs, it also is cast as a guide for the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and operates as a policy document for the department. Its incorporation in the Master Plan is thus something of a hybrid. It is staff's specific intent that only that portion of the document which discusses the physical development of the City, with the need for an additional recreation center in the West End being just one of many examples, will be subject to the regulatory amendment process in the future. The Strategic Plan in its entirety, however, is a living document that should be updated every five years to keep pace with Alexandria's changing environment.

STAFF: Sandra Whitmore, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities;  
Janet Barnett, Deputy Director, Program Operations;  
Kirk Kincannon, Deputy Director, Parks, Natural Resources and Capital

Improvement Operations.

RESOLUTION NO. MPA 2003-0007

WHEREAS, under the Provisions of Section 9.05 of the City Charter, the Planning Commission may adopt amendments to the Master Plan of the City of Alexandria and submit to the City Council such revisions in said plans as changing conditions may make necessary; and

WHEREAS, a Needs Assessment Steering Committee and the Parks and Recreation Commission has worked with outside consultants for over two years to assess the City's needs for parks and recreation and its goals for the future.

WHEREAS, there have been numerous public forums and meetings to gather citizen input on the needs for parks and recreation;

WHEREAS, the proposed Strategic Master Plan for Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities has been reviewed by City staff from a number of City agencies; by the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Environmental Policy Commission; by the Needs Assessment Steering Committee; and

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendment was held on May 8, 2003, with all public testimony and written comment considered; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that:

1. The proposed amendment is necessary and desirable to guide and accomplish the coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the City of Alexandria;
2. The proposed amendment is generally consistent with, indeed furthers the overall goals and objectives of the 1992 Master Plan; and
3. The proposed amendment includes direction and guidance for the City in its effort to achieve a quality of life for its citizens that includes the benefit of parks and recreation; and
4. Based on the foregoing findings and all other facts and circumstances of which the Planning Commission may properly take notice in making and adopting a master plan for the City of Alexandria, adoption of the Strategic Master Plan for Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities as a chapter of the 1992 Master Plan will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the residents of the City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Alexandria that:

1. The Strategic Master Plan for Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities is hereby adopted as a new chapter to the 1992 Master Plan of the City of Alexandria, Virginia in accordance with Section 9.05 of the Charter of the City of Alexandria, Virginia:
2. This resolution shall be signed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission and attested by its secretary, and a true copy of this resolution forwarded and certified to the City Council.

ADOPTED the 8th day of May, 2003.

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Eric Wagner, Chairman  
Alexandria Planning Commission

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eileen P. Fogarty, Secretary

See case file for Open Space Master Plan